



The City Source

Citizens' Newsletter Produced by the City of Lynchburg



Nov. 2002

To the Citizens of Lynchburg:

When Governor Warner recently announced a number of budget cuts to address the state fiscal situation, Lynchburg and other local governments were spared the painful reductions in state funds that some expected. Nevertheless, cuts of nearly \$700,000 have been identified and will have to be addressed. Those cuts are affecting such areas as the public library, juvenile services, the constitutional offices, Project Exile and other grants, and there will be numerous subtle effects that will only become evident over time.

Attention will now shift to the proposed amendments to the biennial budget that the Governor will put forth on December 20th. Because a significant amount of the Fiscal Year 2003 deficit has been addressed with one time savings, there is concern that the Governor, and ultimately the General Assembly, will have to consider cuts to areas that so far have been protected. This includes K-12 Education and Public Safety.

Whatever happens, it is certain that funding from the state to localities will be affected. Although commonly referred to as 'Aid to Localities,' 95% of the funds provided to localities by the state are to support state mandated expenditures. In recent years, state funding for state initiatives has fallen and a larger share of responsibility has been shifted to the localities. Studies by the General Assembly's own research group, the Joint Legislative and Audit Review Commission, have indicated that the state is underfunding K-12 education by about \$1.4 billion a year. Human services and transportation are also

underfunded. One of the questions that each locality will have to answer is to what extent it uses local funds to replace the reduction in state funding.

The state budget situation provides an opportunity for the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia to engage in a discussion about the purpose of government, the desired mix and level of services consistent with willingness to pay, and the division of service delivery responsibilities between the state and its localities. This same discussion will be held at the local level as city councils and boards of supervisors discuss how to satisfy increasing demands for service with shrinking resources. Given the resistance to increasing taxes, choices will have to be made about the level and quality of services provided by local governments.

I urge the citizens of Lynchburg to actively participate in these discussions. There is an initiative in the City workforce called *Seek Out Savings (SOS)* with the goal of finding and eliminating practices, policies and procedures that are expensive, inefficient, ineffective or in any way affect our ability to deliver quality services to the community at the least possible cost. I ask that citizens also share their ideas for cost savings. You can email me directly at kpayne@lynchburgva.gov or write me at P.O. Box 60, Lynchburg, VA 24505.

Thank you,

Kimball Payne
City Manager

Brush and Bulk Pickup Service

One Call Does It All For City Residents!

Just call 856-CITY (2489) for your brush and bulk pickup requests. Phone calls are taken weekdays from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. After you call and receive a scheduled brush and bulk pickup date, place your brush and bulk items on the curb in front of your residence. Please place items out the day before your scheduled pickup, since the crew might come as early as 7:00 a.m. on your scheduled day.

There are certain things you can do to better prepare your brush and bulk items prior to your scheduled pickup. Please keep the following in mind:

- Keep brush and bulk items separate.
- Brush items include twigs and branches (*excluding piles of leaves*).
- Bulk items include furniture, appliances, televisions, etc.
- Place items on the curb in front of your residence. Do not put items near trees or telephone poles.
- Break up brush and bundle it into pieces less than 8 ft. long. Limbs should be no larger than 3 in. diameter.
- Make sure bulk items are not too large (*two people should be able to carry the items*).
- Freon items, such as air conditioners, refrigerators and freezers, are required by law to be kept separate from other

bulk items and are picked up on Wednesdays ONLY.

- Leaves are not eligible for brush and bulk collection. Leaves are picked up for free during designated dates in the fall. If you need to dispose of leaves at other times, just bag and tag them with a 95-cent trash tag.



NOTE: Please call 856-CITY for seasonal leaf pick-up dates.

Free Downtown Trolley Shuttle Available

Dislike coming downtown because available parking isn't close to your destination? The Greater Lynchburg Transit Company (GLTC) has solved the problem. Not only can you just park and ride—it's free!

On Monday - Friday, 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m., 11:15 a.m. - 1:45 p.m., and 4:00 p.m. - 6:15 p.m., GLTC's trolley is providing free service at all bus stops in the downtown area between Court Street, 5th Street, Commerce Street and 12th Street. Just look for the Trolley bus signs.

The trolley also runs on Saturday mornings between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. on a loop to all the major historical sites in the downtown area.

So whether you want to have lunch at one of the great downtown restaurants, conduct business, or check out some of the wonderful historic homes and other sites, remember you can park and ride! For information, call GLTC at 847-7771 or visit their web site at: www.lynchburgva.gov/gltc



A Few Words About 'State Aid' to Local Governments

Editor's Note: The following article is excerpted from a position paper published by the Virginia Municipal League (VML). VML is a statewide, nonprofit, nonpartisan association of city, town and county governments established in 1905 to improve and assist local governments through legislative advocacy, research, education and other services. The membership includes all 39 cities in the state, 154 towns and 14 urban counties.

As the governor and General Assembly go about the business of cutting the fiscal year 2003-2004 biennial budget, one of the "categories" of spending most affected will be something referred to as "state aid to local governments." The term is often misunderstood.

What is "state aid to local governments?"

State aid to local governments is a misnomer. It implies that the money that the state gives to local governments may be used for any purpose that localities desire. In fact, the money referred to as state aid is sent to local governments by the state to pay for services that the state requires local governments to provide.

Examples of these services include schools, numerous programs that comprise the "safety net" for Virginia's less fortunate citizens, and jail operations.

Discretionary funding to local governments accounts for only about 5 percent of all state aid. Not only must the remaining 95 percent be spent for a specific purpose, local governments often must provide local matching funds to help pay for the services.

Local governments are not like a private contractor who can refuse to take on a job. Local governments are required to perform the task to the standards specified by the state regardless of how much money the state gives them to do it.

Education Funding

According to the Senate Finance Committee, K-12 education comprises about two-thirds of aid to localities. Local governments are required to match the state funds based upon an index of their ability to pay. The overwhelming majority of local governments that operate public schools, however, have been compelled to contribute substantially more than the required match.

Virginia's constitution spells out that "the General Assembly shall provide for a system of free public elementary and secondary schools for all children of school age throughout the commonwealth, and shall seek to ensure that an educational program of high quality is established and continually maintained."

One year ago the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) documented that local governments are bearing a disproportionate share of the cost of paying for K-12 education in Virginia. Not only has the state significantly underestimated the costs of the Standards of Quality (SOQ), JLARC also found that there are valid reasons why the state should recognize additional costs excluded from the SOQ formula. The SOQ are minimum requirements intended to provide a program of high-quality education for public elementary and secondary students. The price tag for fixing the underestimated costs for the current biennium is \$1.06 billion, according to JLARC.

As a result of this documented lack of funding by the state, local government spending for public education has put tremendous pressure on local budgets and often forced local elected officials to raise taxes.

Other Services to Keep in Mind

K-12 education accounts for about two-thirds of the money the state sends to localities. State aid for jails and sheriffs, and for mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse services, brings the total amount allotted to local governments to 77 percent. Again, all of these programs require local governments to match the state funds in some manner.

Other services included under the umbrella of state aid to local governments include:

- Comprehensive Services Act for At-Risk Youth and Families.
- Juvenile detention block grants that help cover the operating costs of local and regional juvenile detention facilities.
- Juvenile crime control grants that pay for programs designed to reduce overcrowding in state and local detention facilities.
- Adult community corrections and pre-trial services.
- State and local hospitalization for indigent people.
- Social services, including Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, general relief, foster care, adoption subsidies, food stamps and Medicaid administration, auxiliary grants for aged, blind and disabled people in assisted-living facilities.
- Other constitutional officers, including commissioners of revenue, treasurers and court clerks.
- Election administration.

To read the complete article, go to www.lynchburgva.gov

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HOLIDAY CLOSING

Most Municipal Offices will be CLOSED Nov. 28 & 29 in observance of Thanksgiving.

Trash, bulk and brush **WILL NOT** be collected Thanksgiving Day, but will follow a normal schedule on Friday, November 29. Thursday trash routes will be collected on Saturday, November 30. The Waste Management Facility (landfill) will be **CLOSED on Thursday, November 28**. For more information, please call the Citizens First InfoCenter at 856-CITY (2489).



Water and Sewer Connection Fees to Increase

Lynchburg City Council recently approved an increase in water and sewer connection fees, effective February 3, 2003. If you are considering connection to the City's water and sewer system, you are encouraged to contact the Utilities Division now. Typical residential connection fees will increase as follows:

- **Water: 3/4 inch service, 5/8 inch meter**
Current connection fee: \$360 (*New connection fee: \$500*)
- **Sewer: 4 inch service**
Current connection fee: \$450 (*New connection fee: \$700*)

NOTE: Availability rates will not be affected. For more information, please call the Utilities Division at 847-1322.

For more information about Lynchburg City services, visit our web site at www.lynchburgva.gov